

AMONG THE SHAKERS AT LEBANON.

In the heart of the Berkshires in western Massachusetts one finds a most varied charm. It is the "original" American soil (Plymouth Rock notwithstanding). Here the colonists first refused allegiance to King George. Here is "Constitution Hill," so named for the first suggestion of such a document by those who assembled on its slope to consider the destiny of these scattered groups of free-born souls. Here Longfellow wrote many of his poems; Bryant was town clerk in a nearby village, writing "Thanatopsis"; Hawthorne wrote "The House of Seven Gables" here; while last, but not least, "Josh Billings" was born, lived and was buried here! Surely this is glory enough for any community.

A Land of Abandoned Estates.

The natural beauty of the "Hills" is at once the inspiration and lure of poets and of tourists, and the playground of the rich. Vast estates have been established within recent years by the purchase of many quaint and characteristic New England farms and combining them into one holding. This means the cessation of agricultural interests, and, what is most serious, the breaking up of country homes that preserve and freshen the ever deadening stream of city life. One such estate will illustrate. Twenty years ago, William C. Whitney, of New York, bought many small farms among the highest hills near Pittsfield. The combined acreage totaled 14,000. Even the burial grounds were swallowed up in the transaction. The buildings were closed to waste in slow decay. The tillable soil was cultivated only at whim or to feed the coach horses kept in the spacious barns built on the heights. Here the rich guests found retirement in the great sweep which included most of all the eye could see. Tally-hos carried gay throngs over the hills and along babbling brooks. A game preserve of 1,200 acres in the center was the only fenced portion. In it moose and deer and elk roamed in unmolested plenty. But the sentiment waned and new joys must be found. The seaside beckoned to fashion, and twelve years ago the great house and barns were closed and have never been opened. Like Field's "little toy dog," the empty carriages stand in the silent spaces awaiting the "hand that put them there." The fences are falling down, and the wild deer and moose wander at will over the distant hills, to return each winter where keepers feed them. The whole scene is as of a discarded plaything left unguarded by an overindulgent child.

The Quiet Village of Lebanon.

In striking contrast to all the quest of pleasure stands the quiet village of Lebanon, the first colony of the Shakers. One has but passed through glory after glory of which Solomon scarcely dreamed—reaching a climax at the Shadowbrook home, with its hundred bathrooms (now occupied by Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt)—until he begins the slow ascent of the Taconic Range, and at the crest of the pass is halted by a vision which leaves the heart in one's throat. The Valley of Lebanon is spread out toward the west with its checkered pageantry of colors. Neat stone fences climb the slopes of all the hills and separate little fields, each with its separate yield. But the natural beauty is forgotten when you remember that this is the scene of a great human passion which has been at work here for almost one hundred and fifty years. It is the effort at once to build an ideal Brotherhood of man and a sanctuary of the soul, a communism and a sainthood.

Ann Lee, the Shaker Prophetess.

In 1772, Ann Lee came to America

from Manchester, England. Having been unhappily married and all of her seven children dying, she sought an asylum for her soul. She accepted Jesus' words quite literally, that "except ye take your cross and follow me, ye are not worthy of me." To her the principle of Jesus was the perfection of the spirit of all sacrifice of the material. Jesus was a celibate, and those who take up his cross must forego marriage. Likewise, all who so follow him should have all things in common as did the early disciples. Arriving at a small village above Albany, this prophetess made the first converts and from this center visited Lebanon Valley. Farmers became interested in her message, and, during this period of religious seriousness, many of them accepted the difficult standards she proposed, viz: the relinquishment of all property rights and the acceptance of the celibate life. Splendid farms were thus turned into the common holding and happy families were broken up. Husbands and wives entered the new faith to renounce all physical ties and live henceforth "in the spirit." Naturally none but the exceedingly earnest entered the society. Yet during the middle of the last century there were about 8,000 in the various Shaker colonies in the United States. Their united holdings in the single colony of Lebanon amounted to thousands of acres of land, with enormous buildings and factories for all the industrial support, for which they were famous for 100 years. They originated the seed business. The great building, with its multitudinous pockets all labeled, still stands. In this the various seeds were packed and prepared for shipment. The entrance of public advertising in business closed this department of their community labor, for they will not share the false standards of advertising so widely practiced. They were famous for their clocks and chairs, aside from all the products of farm and dairy activity.

They Had as Their Motto:

"There are hands to work and hearts to guard." Everybody worked—everybody works now—and there is no compulsion. The wisdom of the elders has always guided the individual according to his bent as far as possible. The colonies are so scarcely peopled now that much alien labor must be employed. The majority of the members are women. The elder of the Lebanon Colony is an Austrian Jew. He is a very devout and able man, being a graduate of the University of Vienna and well acquainted with all the current events of world interest. He is passionately seeking to teach and incarnate the teaching of Jesus regarding human brotherhood, the law of love and the forgiveness of enemies. About him in his "family" are some who are as capable as himself. One is a former dean of theology in New York University. It is true that many do not comprehend any ideal beyond a comfortable retreat which bids defiance to care.

Declining Numbers.

The increase to the society is through those (1) who remain of the children who are left with the society at infancy. Only 5 per cent choose this Utopia. Ninety-five per cent prefer the law of struggle in the world of individual initiative and leave this too quiet program of life on arriving at 18 or 20 years of age. (2) Those who are burdened with an overwhelming yearning for a concrete expression of human brotherhood combined with the ascetic life. Of these there are fewer still. (3) Those who are world weary, and who flee to this asylum for refuge. Suffice it to say, that where formerly there were 8,000

now there are but 600 in the 18 various Shaker colonies in America. The estates have grown richer with the accumulation of years. The single colony at Lebanon has 8,500 acres of the richest soil of New England as its farm. Facing the sure decline of numbers and increase in wealth, I asked the elder what the end of it all would be. He replied: "We do not think of that."

The Sunday Worship.

The Sunday service is very simple compared with the peculiar and ecstatic emotions to which they formerly gave themselves. The old church still remains with its great circular roof and three rows of pegs around the walls, where the men hung their hats and coats when the leader "pitched a march." There were no chairs for the Shakers. The visitors were put in elevated seats along one side. The Shakers came in and "toed the lines," the men in one end, and women in the other. After a hymn and brief address—they have no ceremonies, no public prayer—the leader "pitched a march," and, falling into line four abreast, they swung about the great floor in exultant voice and step. After an hour's vigorous marching and singing, the visitors were dismissed. In private worship they were no less realistic. As the singing progressed, some one burdened by his sin would begin shaking until his whole body was convulsed in the agony of shaking off his sins. Hence the name, Shakers. Now the service is quiet. There is much singing. Their hymns are the product of their own life. They have been breathed out in the kitchen, or while swinging the scythe, or in toiling over the wash-tub. They love to recount a time when thirty-six young men arose at 3 o'clock in the morning and marched to the hay-field, four abreast, singing their hymns, and with full measured stroke and virile chant, lay low fourteen acres of hay before breakfast. They resent the term "service" in connection with Sunday worship. "Our service is seven days of honest dealing in the markets," said the elder. "We always add a large potato to a bushel of potatoes. We believe in the good measure."

But like all communism, it means the death of individual initiative. The well meant devotion and sacrifice which sought here to build an ideal brotherhood is not in vain. No such holy passion ever fails. Its very existence bears testimony to the viciousness of our competitive system, which means that

"Surely the weak shall perish,
And only the strong survive."

The law of struggle and the indispensable need of personal initiative need not be lost because competition ceases. The struggle and the initiative may best flourish in reviving the unfit. When all our wits are conserved to the task of creating a "new earth" for the unfortunate and hindered "little ones" of whom Jesus spoke, then shall our brotherhood of man have truly come. In the meantime, we are challenged to think of his ideal kingdom by all such expressions of the deathless longing of men and women to incarnate it.—Christian Evangelist.

INDIA'S MASS MOVEMENT.

In North India, after years of patient seed-sowing, men and women began to turn to Christ by hundreds. The work spread rapidly from village to village. A similar movement

broke out in Gujrat, six hundred miles to the west; later in the Deccan, a thousand miles south; then in Bengal on the east. And now in many different parts of India are to be found whole communities moving toward Christ.

India is divided into many castes, but there are three great classes: the Brahmans, who are the priests and leaders of the people, numbering fifteen millions; the middle classes, one hundred and forty-two millions; and the depressed classes, "the untouchables," sixty-five millions. It is among these depressed people—the sweepers, the leather workers, the weavers, and small farmers—that the mass movement is having its greatest effect.

Rapidly has the work developed. It took thirty years of earnest labor before the Methodist Church numbered three thousand Indian converts. But for several years past that Church has been winning to Christ over twenty-five thousand men and women annually. So rapidly has the work advanced that the Church at home has not kept up with the movement, for the following startling figures are given:

Baptized in India last year..	35,000
Seekers turned away by the Methodist Church last year	40,000
Waiting inquirers who have waited in vain.....	152,000
People now accessible	500,000 to 1,000,000

Possibly some one asks, Why not go ahead and baptize the seekers and the inquirers and receive them into the Christian Church? Their lives are full of superstition and idolatrous customs, so that before a man is received into the Christian Church he must know what he has to leave behind him and what is the new life into which he is entering, what he must put off and what put on. We dare not bap-

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